

*Moon Fever*

Jupiter's summer was too much. The pool was too bright in the sun's late afternoon gaze, the false lashes too long, the shallow music at night too loud. She had considered getting a tattoo, purchased six-inch heels, eaten chocolate-covered strawberries and drank lemonade. She met a girl named Lilac, who had cursive etched into her left hip and wore French braids too often.

Lilac had long acrylic nails, which was disappointing, but those nails were attached to a hand that reached out for Jupiter's. She would ride her cruiser bike to Jupiter's house every morning— Lilac lived at the top of the slope, Jupiter lived at the bottom— wearing a sundress and a pair of black boots, or maybe an oversized T-shirt and a pair of mom jeans, but always with the same black boots, and always with swimwear underneath. She would knock at the door, and Jupiter would invite her in, but they would never stay long. The beach was too enticing.

They fascinated each other. Lilac was sweetness bottled, cherries and roses and fairy milk. Jupiter was canned macabre, paper cuts and bones and vodka. Lilac greeted the dawn with grace and softness and sips from a cup of steaming hot tea. Jupiter cursed the morning (or rather, afternoon) sun and downed her iced coffees with sweetener and non-dairy creamer in an effort to take the bitterness out of her weary bones.

The one thing Lilac and Jupiter shared was an adoration for the water. They worshipped it, prayed to it, whispered secrets to it, answered when it called. Their bodies felt at home under the surf, and they always had more grace than they did on land, as if they were made to glide and float. Lilac once compared it to flying. Jupiter went to the beach to become a mermaid, and ended up on the sand, gasping for breath as she looked at Lilac.

Sometimes they went to the corner store to buy pre-made sandwiches and glass bottles of lemonade and took them to Jupiter's house. They showered, changed clothes, ate their

sandwiches on the grass in Jupiter's sunny backyard. Lilac would glow brilliantly in the afternoon sun, and Jupiter would feel as though she belonged in the shadows.

Lilac and Jupiter went where their instincts led them, bringing a bottle of booze with them or a decent snack, to be polite. Lilac got looser when she drank, more handsy, and Jupiter found that she didn't mind this. She let Lilac move her as she pleased, take her where she wanted, feeling as though Lilac was one end of an elastic band and she was the other. If Jupiter had moved too far away, the band would've snapped, she was sure of it.

One of those times, Lilac kissed Jupiter. They kissed until Jupiter cried, cried because it was all too much and too good. Lilac didn't understand much of Jupiter, but she understood that Jupiter didn't trust good things. She knew that Jupiter didn't trust her, didn't trust herself. But they never stopped. Every day after that, they kissed and held hands and stared into each other's eyes. Eventually, they made love on the couch, in Jupiter's house, and they never thought twice about it. They grew familiar with each other's bodies and fell in love with the parts the other hated about themselves. Lilac had a mole on her shoulder blade that Jupiter could write poetry about. Jupiter had freckles that Lilac carefully memorialized in her sketchbook to a nearly obsessive extent. Jupiter was in Heaven and she didn't feel like she knew the sensation, she felt like an alien with wings, but she would've been fine with that. She'd liked flying underwater with Lilac.

Jupiter woke up early one morning with a seed of dread growing rapidly in her stomach, but she waited. This was futile, she knew, because Lilac would leave for home that day, but the irrational caverns of her mind begged for one last sight of her. Jupiter waited for the knock at the door, but the knock never came, and she went down to the beach by herself. She bought one sandwich and one bottle of lemonade at the corner store. She didn't bother to text or to call or to

go to Lilac's house. At one point she thought she heard the rumble of thunder. She scrolled through her phone, looking at pictures of Lilac, the seed having grown into a large willow, reaching up to touch the sky and bending back down to touch Lilac's house at the top of the slope. Jupiter mourned the summer quietly from her shower floor.